UNITED NATIONS **A**

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Fiftieth session
Item 121 of the preliminary list*

PATTERN OF CONFERENCES

Control and limitation of documentation: provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly

Note by the Secretariat

1. In paragraph 3 of its resolution 49/221 B of 23 December 1994, the General Assembly requested the following bodies to submit, in accordance with existing procedures, to the Assembly at its fiftieth session, through the Committee on Conferences, justifications for the continuation of the current entitlement to meeting records:

(a) United Nations Administrative Tribunal (when holding oral hearings);

(b) Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space;

(c) First Committee;

(d) Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples;

(e) Subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that meet on the occasion of international days of solidarity proclaimed by the Assembly;

(f) Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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* A/50/50/Rev.1.

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2. On 18 January and 6 February 1995, letters were sent to the relevant secretaries asking them to bring the Assembly's request to the attention of the aforementioned bodies.

3. As at 31 May, replies had been received from the United Nations Administrative Tribunal, the First Committee, the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People; the latter is the only subsidiary organ of the General Assembly that now meets on the occasion of an international day of solidarity proclaimed by the Assembly. The substantive parts of those replies are contained in the annex to the present note.

4. The replies from the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space and the Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees will be issued in an addendum to the present note.

5. The following table indicates the number of meeting records prepared for the six bodies in question during the last five years and, for comparison purposes, the total number of records (both verbatim and summary) done in New York, Geneva and Vienna during the same period.

Number of meeting records done in 1990-1994

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Administrative Tribunal (PV)	1	1	-	1	-
Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (PV)	15	14	13	14	13
First Committee (PV)	50	45	40	37 a/	26
Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (PV)	15	21	14	17	12
Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (PV)	1	1	1	1	1
Executive Committee of the Programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (SR)	13	10	10	8	8
Total	95	92	78	78	60
Total for New York	757	777	880	887	864
Geneva	469	424	384	459	497
Vienna	23	99	33	111	36
Grand total	1 249	1 300	1 297	1 457	1 397

a/ Of which 33 were summary records.

Annex

I. UNITED NATIONS ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL

Letter from the Executive Secretary

[Original: English]

[23 February 1995]

Meeting records are used by the Tribunal only when it holds oral hearings, which is quite infrequently. No oral hearings were held in 1994, and only one oral hearing was held in 1993. There were no oral hearings in 1992.

When the Tribunal holds oral hearings in a case under review, it is essential to have a written record of the hearing. The members of the Tribunal review the records in their own subsequent deliberations on the case and, in the event of further proceedings, pursuant to articles 11 or 12 of the statute of the Tribunal, meetings records would be the only admissible evidence of oral hearings.

In the light of the sparing use that has been made of meeting records by the Tribunal and in the light of the fact that transcription of oral hearings are a standard court practice, the Tribunal requests recognition of the need for continuing entitlement to meeting records as necessary.

II. FIRST COMMITTEE

Letter from the Secretary of the Committee

[Original: English]

[2 May 1995]

The Disarmament and International Security Committee (First Committee), which deals exclusively with disarmament and international security agenda items, was provided in the past with verbatim records of its meetings except at the forty-eighth session, during which the Committee was provided with summary records.

The Committee, in accordance with established practice, begins its session each successive year with a substantive general debate followed by an extensive exchange of views on all disarmament and international security items. In the course of those two phases, delegations register the national positions of their respective Governments and present new proposals and suggestions on the various items before the Committee.

Since, in many instances, the items allocated to the First Committee remain on its agenda for several years, the verbatim records of each session of the Committee are a source of substantive background information on various subjects

for other disarmament bodies such as the Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission, etc. These verbatim records are considered to be very helpful to those bodies in the fulfilment of the respective mandates entrusted to them. In this connection, it is pertinent to note that the General Assembly, almost every year, requests the Secretary-General to provide one of the aforementioned bodies, namely, the Disarmament Commission, with the official records of the First Committee. For instance, by paragraph 12 of its resolution 49/77 A, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to transmit to the Disarmament Commission the annual report of the Conference on Disarmament together with all the official records of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly relating to disarmament matters.

Furthermore, I would like to add that it is equally essential for delegations and the Secretariat to have an accurate record of what is stated by Member States. This is especially important with regard to explanations of vote, where no written texts are provided by delegations addressing the Committee. In instances where a delegation does not wish to cast a negative vote or does not want to break a consensus reached on a text, it may nevertheless wish to have its views or positions reflected in the official records of the Committee. In addition, not all delegations prepare written texts even for major statements during the general debate and during the structured thematic debate in the First Committee. Hence, unless records of the debate are maintained, major difficulties would be encountered in referring later to the positions expressed by Member States. It would require delegations to maintain their own records and the Centre for Disarmament Affairs would perhaps be obliged to transcribe a summary record of the proceedings, thereby creating an additional workload for the staff, which is already stretched to the limit of its capacity.

Moreover, in view of the ongoing process of rationalization and reform of the work of the First Committee, the programme of work of the Committee was further revised at the forty-ninth session in order to promote a more detailed and focused discussion of agenda items, in the future, as follows:

(a) Formal meetings, including the phases of a general debate and consideration of and action on draft resolutions submitted under all disarmament and international security agenda items;

(b) Informal meetings, including the phase of thematic discussion of specific items under consideration in the First Committee;

(c) Formal meetings, including the phase of a general debate, consideration and action on draft resolutions submitted under the item entitled "Question of Antarctica".

Consequently, since only formal meetings require verbatim records, the total number of official records of the First Committee, as a result of the new approach, has been drastically reduced from more than 40 formal meetings in the previous years to less than 25 meetings at the last session of the General Assembly. The reduction of such a magnitude with respect to the official records will continue to result in significant savings for the Organization.

III. SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Letter from the Secretary of the Committee

[Original: English]

[13 February 1995]

The matter was raised at a Bureau meeting of the Committee on 30 January 1995 during which members unanimously agreed to maintain the practice of recorded meetings for the 1995 session, following the recommendation made by the Working Group contained in the report of the Special Committee adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session (A/49/23 (Part I)).

At the same meeting, the members of the Bureau also decided to review the question again in 1996.

IV. COMMITTEE ON THE EXERCISE OF THE INALIENABLE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE

Letter from the Chairman of the Committee

[Original: English]

[15 May 1995]

The Solemn Meeting of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People takes place on 29 November each year in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/40 B of 2 December 1977.

The Committee believes that, in view of the importance of the International Day and its political sensitivity, as well as the high level of participation, the provision of the verbatim record for the Meeting should be maintained. The verbatim record also constitutes a very useful and accurate historical account of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.